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Hypnotic Suggestion
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Hypnotic Suggestion as a Cure for Asthma.

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Within the present century the interest in hypnotism has been greatly intensified and its therapeutical uses considerably widened by the enlargement of knowledge and the establishment of hitherto uncertain conditions. This is aided, also, by the scientific reasoning which is abroad in all the world and which must recognize everything in nature as worthy of consideration, and if we are to help truth it must be by scientific deductions and not by a priori negation. This is well, as the physician must carefully scrutinize the foundations of his work and the validity of its structure.

It is not my intention here to enter into an exposition of hypnotic experiments or a discussion of the methods of producing the phenomena, but to give clinical memoranda of the cases of asthma I have treated with hypnotic suggestion.

Neither do I wish to claim any originality in applying this mode of treatment to this form of disease, as it has been noted by a number of others and has ceased to be a clinical curiosity. In a recent article by Lichtschain on "Hypnotism as a Therapeutic Agent," (N. Y. Med. Journal, May 30, 1896,) he says that in nervous asthma we succeed very often in aborting attacks and curing it in a few sittings.

The origin of asthma has long been attributed to a neurosis which depends upon the existence of a peculiar diathesis (Loomis). Still, our knowledge of this very important subject of pathology is very imperfect, but we know a number of facts about the distinct association and relation of the neuro-vascular connection of certain organs and parts of the body which produce attacks of asthma reflexly. Thus an intra-nasal disease or some ailment of the heart, kidneys, stomach or intestines, and of other organs and parts of the body, as hemorrhoids and stricture of the rectum, as well as of the urethra, have often proved to be the primary cause of asthma, so that the body should be carefully examined for any pathological condition that might lead to it reflexly, and if any such cause is found it should be removed before hypnotic treatment is commenced. However, I am of the opinion that the attacks of asthma could be stopped even if these conditions were unaltered, but it is to that class of asthmatics where we cannot locate or remove the cause, and which is generally attributed to nervous attacks, that I especially recommend hypnotic treatment, and I here append a number of cases thus treated:

Case I. Master H. K., aged five, had severe attacks of asthma several times a day. This condition had been present six weeks and various treatments were tried. No pathological condition of the body could be found except a tight

prepuce, which was operated upon; but all treatment failed, and, as a last resort, hypnotism was tried, and the attacks entirely disappeared after one treatment.

Case II. Mr. I., aged fifty-four, suffered from attacks of asthma every night or in the early morning. I was present with him in three of these attacks. His chest would become very rigid and his abdominal breathing would be very distressing.

This condition was brought on primarily, I believe, by a mitral regurgitation and was at the point where compensation was about to cease. His breathing was labored by walking; his stomach had become deranged and his tongue was thickly coated; his kidneys were not yet involved. The asthmatic attacks were aborted by one hypnotic treatment, which I used in conjunction with the usual remedies for the treatment of mitral regurgitation.

Seven other cases I have treated entirely by hypnosis, which were of the kind we ordinarily meet, those whose origin is so obscure as to be termed nervous attacks. These cases were entirely cured and were cases which had been troubled from several months to several years. The number of treatments required was from one to three, though patients should be treated several times and the impression left that the disease will never return again.

My experience with this mode of treatment is now sufficient to enable me to claim that attacks of asthma can be entirely dissipated. This is a better showing than that obtained by other methods, and finally, from the length of time that has elapsed from the treatment of these cases, there is some certainty that these patients will not suffer from recurrent attacks.

